

MEMORANDUM

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USAF, ARMY reviews completed.

May 6, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: HENRY A. KISSINGER
FROM: AL HAIG
SUBJECT: Our Tactical Air Effort in MR I

General Abrams has sent in an interesting wrap-up on his efforts to disrupt the movement of enemy units and supplies toward Hue by the use of tactical air and B-52 strikes. The full report is attached.

-- We have evidence that the enemy is making an all-out effort to position his artillery and combat elements in the Hue area for the earliest possible attacks.

-- We are now staging around-the-clock tactical air strikes on all the major arteries leading south from inside North Vietnam.

-- On 2 May 7th Air Force armed reconnaissance detected over 100 trucks coming down Route 137 north of the DMZ. They were engaged both day and night by specially equipped F-4s. Eighty-two trucks were destroyed.

-- In the last two days tactical air strikes have destroyed and damaged 126 trucks north of Hue.

Our ability to operate both day and night within the heavy SAM rings is due largely to our intensive campaign to destroy all SAMs in the last seven days.

-- Only one SAM was fired last evening despite heavy B-52 and tactical air activity within the SAM ring.

-- We are also engaged in an intensive effort to locate and destroy the storage areas into which the enemy is moving his supplies and equipment.

-- This intensive air activity, coupled with heavy rains now being experienced in the Laotian trail area, has caused a reduction of over 50% in censor detections since the current supply offensive began.

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General Abrams's Report on Air Efforts

Following the withdrawal from Quang Tri, I have concentrated the air effort in an intensive campaign to disrupt the movement of enemy units and supplies southward toward Hue. This has been an around-the-clock effort with TacAir present on virtually all the major arteries leading south from inside North Vietnam itself down to the defensive line at the Song O Lau river north of Hue. In addition, we have been working Route 547 leading from the A Shau valley into Hue. We have evidence that the enemy is making an all out effort to position his artillery and combat elements in the Hue area for the earliest possible attacks. He is obviously attempting to exploit what he believes to be the disorganized ARVN situation in the Hue area.

On 2 May, 7th Air Force armed RECCE aircraft detected a movement of over 100 trucks in several convoys north of the DMZ coming down Route 137. They were engaged by TacAir both day and night with specially equipped F-4s employing flares operating in the night hours. Eighty-two trucks were destroyed and the remainder of the convoy was dispersed. Several thousand cubic feet of supplies being loaded on these trucks were also taken under attack by TacAir with most being destroyed and the rest dispersed. In the last two days, he has continued with major efforts to move trucks down all arteries leading toward Hue. TacAir destroyed and damaged 126 trucks in this area on 4 May and another 46 yesterday. Yesterday a FAC caught the enemy attempting to rebuild the bridge at Quang Tri employing a large crane which was immediately struck and destroyed along with the partially rebuilt bridge.

These unprecedented daylight movements and activities in the face of overwhelming TacAir indicate the enemy is making extraordinary efforts to speed up the attack on Hue. To complicate this problem, 7th Air Force has attacked all the fords across the Ben Hai river and knocked out every bridge from the DMZ down to the friendly defensive positions. They will be kept knocked out. When new fords appear, they will be immediately rendered inoperable.

Our ability to operate TacAir both day and night within the heavy SAM rings is due largely to the fact that we have conducted an intensive campaign to destroy all SAMs and SAM equipment in the last seven days. In addition to our armed RECCE program which has accounted for many SAMs and launchers destroyed, we have set up a quick reaction strike

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force colocated with the Tac RECCE at Udorn. We read out the photos wet, put them in the hands of the pilots and attack the SAM facility immediately. This has reduced our reaction time and has paid high dividends.

During the period just described we have destroyed eight SAMs and damaged at least seven more. Today we have destroyed two more as of noon. We now attack and mine any SAM associated earth scratchings rather than wait until the equipment moves in.

Last evening despite heavy B-52 TacAir activity within the SAM rings, only one SAM was fired. With regard to tank activity, I believe we are in a position to detect and attack almost immediately, through our FAC and DASC control system, any enemy tank activity before it assumes threatening proportions. In this connection the 4 May report which stated "aerial photos of 3 May detected 36 probably PT-76 tanks vicinity Quang Tri city" was erroneous. This report stemmed from a Navy RA-5 mission flown on 1 May. The coordinates fall right in the Quang Tri combat base which was abandoned on that day. Examination of the photos indicate these are U.S. tanks left behind by ARVN and subsequently struck by U.S. TacAir and B-52s.

This morning the enemy attempted to attack south along the east side of Highway 1 with more than 25 tanks. They are reported by the FACS to be a mixture of PT-76s, T-34s and PT-63s. They were immediately detected by the FACS and as of this reporting time eleven have been destroyed and twelve more damaged. I have every confidence that this force will be destroyed or turned back before it can make a serious penetration of friendly lines.

As soon as the pressure at An Loc had decreased sufficiently, I shifted both gunship and TacAir effort to the stell tiger area. Reports indicate the enemy has planned an intensive re-supply campaign between 1 and 10 May. This was reflected in movement detections by our sensors with a high of 1,300 detections on the 29th and 30th of April. We have employed 20-plus FAC aircraft along these arteries who are calling in TacAir to exploit any findings and they have been successful in destroying a substantial number of trucks. However, the real purpose of our intensive TacAir activity in this area now is to locate the storage areas into which he has been moving his supplies and equipment. We have located several of these which the FACs describe as extremely lucrative supply and support

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facilities loaded with stores and POL. TacAir has attacked these points and I have directed B-52 strikes in on them. We counted 159 secondary explosions from a B-52 attack on a similar facility. This TacAir and B-52 activity, coupled with heavy rains now being experienced in the trail area, has caused a reduction of over 50 percent in detections since the current supply offensive began.

We have been carefully watching the enemy activity in the B-3 front area looking for tanks with FACs by day and gunships by night. This morning in the vicinity of Polei Kleng, FACs discovered five tanks north of the town. TacAir with rocketeers was directed in and the FAC and an army helicopter in the immediate vicinity confirmed that the ordnance landed on the tanks. However, they were running for a tree line at the time and we are unable to determine the results. This is the only concentration of tanks we have confirmed in this area in a number of days. In addition, we have made a major effort in support of ARVN attempts to re-open Route 14 between Pleiku and Kontum. I have urged this operation because of the difficulty of air supplying Kontum in the face of enemy artillery capability against the air field. After three days of intensive TacAir and B-52 strikes, friendly forces were able to seize the high ground in the pass area.

We employed CBU 55 bombs delivered by A-37s in the same manner in which we helped the ROKs open the An Khe pass last week. Recognizing the threat posed by enemy heavy artillery, we are undertaking a major effort to locate and destroy 130 mm and other large caliber pieces which may be positioned around Hue. We are attempting to use the IR detection capability of the AC-130 spectre gunship to locate and destroy these weapons. Two nights ago, 130 mm fire against fire support base King, west of Hue, ceased when the gunship came on station and resumed after he left. In the last 24 hours, the gunships have been on station around the clock and the FSB has received no heavy artillery rounds. They did fire mortars which stopped when the spectre took the suspected mortar position under attack. We will continue to employ all means possible to locate and destroy this artillery as it is brought up.

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